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SUBJECT: KUNDUZ AUTHORITIES TURN TO MILITIAS AS SECURITY
DETERIORATES

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Provincial authorities in Kunduz, increasingly alarmed at the deterioration of the security situation in the province, have turned to a last resort: supporting local mujahedeen commanders to fight the Taliban. While supporting local commanders has some short-term security benefits, these are likely to come at the expense of formal institutions such as the police if there is no outlook for their future integration into the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). One neighboring governor, Atta Mohammad Noor in Balkh Province, disagreed with the arming of local militias in Kunduz, and the outgoing German commander of RC-North also signaled his concern. We will continue to monitor the evolution of this local defense initiative and similar ones throughout the country. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Kunduz Governor Eng. Mohammad Omar and National Directorate of Security (NDS) officials announced at a September 13th weekly meeting on security issues with the PRT and others that they were providing support to local militias to combat the insurgency. Kunduz Deputy NDS Chief Karim Atrafi told State PRTOff that, for the past two months, NDS has been paying mujahedeen commanders so that they could buy arms on the local market. Atrafi added a positive spin on the program, arguing that it was driving up the cost of arms on the market, making it more expensive for the Taliban to do business. Atrafi asserted that the support provided by NDS was financial only (i.e. not in the form of arms) and that the militia forces were under the authority of the Afghan National Police (ANP).

¶3. (SBU) Based on conversations with the Governor, NDS, UNAMA, and the PRT's J-9, it appears the effort to support mujahedeen commanders to fight the insurgency has focused on the districts of Imam Saheb (northern Kunduz province), Khanabad (eastern Kunduz), and Qala-e-Zal (northwestern Kunduz). According to NDS, in Chahar Dara district insurgent infiltration was too high for a similar effort to be feasible, but the September 4 coalition airstrike disrupted the insurgent network in Chahar Dara to such an extent that NDS has also begun efforts there to support friendly militias.

¶4. (SBU) In Khanabad district, the power broker behind the militias is the Tajik commander Mir Alam, who was formerly police chief of Baghlan and who, according to many observers, has ambitions on the post of Kunduz provincial police chief. Mir Alam's sub-commanders have reportedly driven out Taliban from villages in the volatile area of Aqtash; however there are conflicting accounts from ANP and other sources regarding whether this was done more through negotiation or actual fighting.

¶5. (SBU) In Imam Saheb, members of the Uzbek Ibrahimi family (who hold several key government positions in the area, including Imam Saheb district police chief, Governor of neighboring Takhar province, and a seat in parliament) have, along with local commanders and community elders, pressed Kunduz authorities to provide them with arms and ammunition. We understand that

authorities initially told them they should have enough arms in their possession to resist the Taliban. However, when the commanders themselves came under threat from insurgents, authorities relented and agreed to have NDS provide them with a limited quantity of weapons.

¶6. (SBU) In Qala-e-Zal, militias controlled by Turkmen commander Nabi Gichi have had some success in fighting the insurgency in the northern part of the district. According to the Governor and NDS, Gichi's forces killed twenty insurgents and convinced a Taliban commander to join the government side. Gov. Omar suggested at a recent meeting that Gichi should be brought into a government position.

¶7. (SBU) Atta Mohammad Noor, the Governor of Balkh Province, has publicly criticized the move to arm local militias in Kunduz. When Ambassador Wayne visited RC-North on October 1, outgoing RC-North Commander Vollmer briefed on his perspective of the sources of instability and violence, but signaled that he was not comfortable with the use of militias to counter the problem. He said what was needed was about 2500 more police in the province.

COMMENT

¶8. (SBU) Provincial authorities have become increasingly frustrated over the past several months over the rapidly deteriorating security situation in Kunduz province and what they see as the lack of adequate ANSF (particularly ANP) and ISAF forces to take on the insurgency. The effort to support local militias to combat the insurgency is a sign of how deeply frustrated, almost desperate,

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they have become. Their willingness to discuss these efforts, the legality of which is not clear, suggests they have received a green light as well as funding from someone in the central government in Kabul.

¶9. (SBU) Beyond reversing even the limited progress toward disarmament made under DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration) and DIAG (Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups) programs, the implications of supporting local militias to combat the insurgency are both complex and uncertain. In many cases, these militias are likely considerably stronger in both numbers and arms than the under-staffed and under-equipped police, which puts the official assertion of MoI/ANP control over the militias in doubt. In addition, provincial authorities do not appear to have plans to integrate these militias into the ANSF, raising questions about how long funding for them will continue and what will become of them (and their arms) once the threat from the insurgency is mitigated.

¶10. (SBU) The short-term security benefits of supporting militias led by mujahedeen commanders are significant. However, these benefits are likely to come at the expense of Afghan institutions such as the ANP if support to militias is not coupled with GIROA monitoring, stepped-up efforts to build up the ANP and a plan to eventually draw down and disarm the militias or integrate them into ANSF. In particular, the effort is likely to undermine Gen. Abdul Rizzaq Yaqubi, an unusually competent and professional provincial police chief, while at the same time strengthening former commander Mir Alam, a figure with a history of human rights abuses and administrative incompetence as police chief of Baghlan. Mission will continue to monitor closely the evolution of this local defense initiative and similar ones throughout the country. End Comment.

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